

BEFORE YOUR FLU VACCINATION...

Inform your surgery if...

- You have ever had a reaction to a previous flu vaccination
- You are feeling unwell or have a raised temperature
- You are allergic to hens' eggs or antibiotics

It's a busy time for your surgery so try to help the clinic run as smoothly as possible by taking off your coat and rolling up your sleeve before you are called for your vaccination.



FLU & YOU

what's really true?



Scan the QR
code above with your
smartphone to access
www.flu-protect.co.uk

FLU & YOU

© Sanofi Pasteur MSD Initiative

FLU & YOU

WHAT IS FLU?

Flu (influenza) is a very common illness that is highly infectious and spread by the coughs and sneezes of people who have it. You can also pick up flu by touching something like a door handle if someone who has flu has touched it before you.

HOW SERIOUS IS FLU?

In some people flu develops into more serious illnesses, such as bronchitis and pneumonia, and could mean they have to be admitted to hospital. It can also make existing medical conditions worse. In the UK, the estimated number of excess deaths thought to be due to seasonal flu varies each year but has been as high as 10,000, and in years of a flu epidemic this estimate has reached more than 20,000.¹

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST FLU?

You can be protected against flu by having a simple vaccination against it. The flu vaccine gives good protection against flu and lasts for about a year. Because the strains (types) of flu can change, a new flu vaccine is produced each year to protect you against the different strains of flu that the World Health Organization expect to be most common that winter.¹

WHO SHOULD HAVE THE FLU VACCINE?

Anyone from the age of 6 months can get the flu vaccination, but for some people it's especially recommended by the Department of Health and is free. If you are in one of the groups listed on the back page you are at greater risk of developing serious complications from flu if you catch it, even if you are fit and healthy now. Because the flu virus changes (mutates) every year, you should have a flu vaccination every year to make sure that you are protected against the latest strains of it.¹



FLU – SO WHAT IS TRUE?

MYTH: FLU IS JUST A BAD COLD – I COULD FIGHT IT OFF

Just not true! Although some of the symptoms are similar to a cold, if you catch flu, you're likely to feel much worse. You could feel terrible – shivery, achy and even too weak to get out of bed. Flu can give you a headache, high temperature, dry cough, sore throat, runny nose and can make you feel ill for many weeks. Many people feel unable to work or carry on as normal if they have flu. Some people with flu develop very serious complications, even if they've been fit and well before it.



MYTH: FLU IS ONLY DANGEROUS TO THE ELDERLY, OR VERY SICK AND WEAK PEOPLE

Just not true! Although the majority of deaths caused by flu happen in people who are over 65, flu affects many healthy people under 65 too!² For most people flu is quite a nasty experience, but it can also have some very serious complications, which are even more dangerous for people with other medical conditions (even if they feel healthy now).

MYTH: IF I'M HEALTHY AND HAVE NEVER HAD FLU, I DON'T NEED THE VACCINE

Just not true! Anyone and everyone can catch flu. But vaccination isn't just about keeping you free from flu, it's also about protecting those around you too. Just because you've never had it before, doesn't mean you won't get it this year and pass it on to other people who may be at risk of developing serious complications from it.²

THE FLU VACCINE – DON'T BE MYTH-INFORMED

MYTH: FLU VACCINES ARE DANGEROUS AND HAVEN'T BEEN PROPERLY TESTED

Just not true! The seasonal flu vaccine has been well tested, has an excellent safety record and is given to millions of people in the UK and around the world every year. The risks of having a serious reaction to the vaccine is less than one in a million – much lower than the risk of getting seriously ill from having the flu itself.²

MYTH: THE FLU VACCINE CAN GIVE YOU FLU

Just not true! It is impossible for the flu vaccine to give you flu, as none of the ingredients in the vaccine can cause the flu.

MYTH: THE FLU VACCINE MAKES YOU FEEL TERRIBLE

Just not true! Side effects of the vaccine should not make you feel unwell. However, you may feel a temporary soreness where you have been injected. You may have achy muscles and joints, a slightly raised temperature, or headache. These symptoms should go away after a couple of days and are generally a lot less serious than getting flu.² If these symptoms go on for longer, or you have any other symptoms that cause you concern you should talk to your GP or practice nurse.

MYTH: VACCINES DON'T WORK

Just not true! Vaccines are one of the greatest public health innovations in recent history and no other medical intervention has done more to save lives.⁴ The flu vaccine has been proven to reduce the number of deaths and hospital admissions.¹ However, no vaccine offers 100% protection and a very small number of people will still get infected despite being vaccinated.

MYTH: I HAD THE FLU VACCINE LAST YEAR AND STILL GOT FLU!

This may or may not be true! Flu vaccination happens at a time of year when lots of other viruses are causing colds and other illnesses and people can mistake these for flu. Flu vaccination cannot prevent the common cold. In addition, it can take your body up to ten days to develop protection from the vaccine so it is possible to catch flu before it has a chance to work. It is worth remembering that no vaccine can provide 100% protection and so some people may go on to catch flu even if they are vaccinated. However, vaccination is still the most effective way to prevent infection with flu.



IS IT FOR YOU?

To protect people who are most at-risk of serious illness or death if they develop flu, the Department of Health recommends flu vaccination every year for everyone in the groups below:¹

- people aged 65 years and over
- all those aged 6 months or older with the following conditions
 - chest problems, including certain asthmatics on steroid inhalers or steroid tablets and those with chronic bronchitis or emphysema
 - chronic heart disease
 - diabetes
 - chronic kidney disease
 - chronic liver disease
 - chronic neurological disease
- people who are immunosuppressed, have no spleen or whose spleen does not work properly
- pregnant women
- those in contact with people who may be at risk of developing serious complications from flu
 - people living in long stay residential care homes
 - carers
 - healthcare professionals

References

1. Department of Health (Green Book) 2006. Immunisation against infectious disease. Chapter 19: Influenza, updated May 2011. Accessed May 2012.
2. <http://www.nhsemployers.org/HealthyWorkplaces/StaffHealthAndWell-Being/Pages/12-common-myths-about-flu.aspx> Accessed May 2012
3. Department of Health, Chief Medical Officer Letter, May 2011. Gateway reference Number: 16066. Accessed May 2012.
4. <http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/vaccinations/Pages/miracles.aspx> Accessed May 2012.



AFTER YOUR FLU VACCINATION...

Remember, the flu vaccine can't give you flu! Like all vaccines, the flu vaccine can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them. You may:

- Feel a temporary soreness where you have been injected
- Have slight swelling and redness at the site of injection
- Have achy muscles or joints, a slightly raised temperature, or headache

These symptoms are expected and should go away after a couple of days, but if they last for longer or you have any symptoms that cause you concern, talk to your GP or practice nurse.



Visit www.flu-protect.co.uk
for more information about
flu and the flu vaccination.

